

RETAIL PRICES - MARCH QUARTER, 1950.

All Items - "C" Series.

Index numbers of retail prices of all items ("C" Series) - with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1000 - for the March quarter, 1950, with figures for December quarter, 1949, for comparison (in brackets), were:- Brisbane, 1414 (1393); Toowoomba, 1429 (1408); Rockhampton, 1428 (1399); Townsville, 1469 (1444); Bundaberg, 1401 (1374); and Warwick, 1406 (1390).

The rise in retail prices in the March quarter of 1950 (as measured by the "C" Series index number) was a little less than in the previous quarter in Brisbane, Toowoomba, Townsville, and Warwick. In Rockhampton and Bundaberg it was slightly greater.

The rise of 1.5 per cent. in Brisbane was the smallest rate of increase since the September quarter of 1947, with the exception of the first quarter of 1949, when retailers' selling margins were reduced. Over a twelve-monthly period, the rise in prices reached a maximum in the twelve months ended December, 1948, with an increase of 11.0 per cent. The increase in the twelve months ended March, 1950, was 9.2 per cent.

During the recent quarter, increased food prices caused more than half of the total rise in the Brisbane index. Food and grocery prices increased by 2.6 per cent. (compared with 2.9 per cent. in the previous quarter), while clothing and footwear rose by 1.3 per cent. (compared with 3.1 per cent. in the previous quarter). Prices of miscellaneous items (which are largely affected by electricity and gas charges, and therefore rise in fairly large steps as tariffs are adjusted from time to time) rose by 0.9 per cent. The largest rise recorded in this group since the war was one of 4.7 per cent. in the June quarter of 1948.

At the end of the recent war, Brisbane food prices were 13.2 per cent. and clothing prices 72.1 per cent. above pre-war level. Since the end of the war, prices of commodities in both these sections of the index have risen by nearly another 50 per cent., the food index being now 44.7 per cent. and the clothing index 47.1 per cent. above the June quarter of 1945, making them respectively 63.8 and 153.2 per cent. above pre-war (1938-39) level.

The indexes show the following percentage increases when compared with those for the periods shown.

Retail Price Index, "C" Series, Percentage Increases, March Quarter, 1950.

City.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From March Quarter, 1949.	From December Quarter, 1949.
	%	%	%
Brisbane	63.8	9.2	1.5
Toowoomba	67.9	9.6	1.5
Rockhampton	65.9	9.3	2.1
Townsville.. ..	61.1	8.3	1.7
Bundaberg	66.6	8.9	2.0
Warwick	71.0	8.7	1.2

Food and groceries, clothing and footwear, and the miscellaneous group of items comprising household drapery and hardware, fuel, light, fares, etc., have shown the following percentage changes during the last quarter and since 1938-39.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases^a, March Quarter, 1950.

City.	Food and Groceries.		Clothing and Footwear.		Miscellaneous Items.	
	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Dec. Quarter, 1949.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Dec. Quarter, 1949.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Dec. Quarter, 1949.
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brisbane	63.8	2.6	153.2	1.3	39.6	0.9
Toowoomba	74.2	2.8	155.2	1.3	35.0	0.1
Rockhampton	61.3	3.8	151.4	1.8	41.5	0.4
Townsville	57.0	2.5	152.9	1.6	42.1	2.0
Bundaberg	59.2	3.2	153.6	1.5	39.4	1.5
Warwick	68.1	2.4	153.7	1.0	38.9	-0.1

^a Minus (-) indicates decrease.

Food and Rent (4 and 5 Roomed Houses).

As shown in the previous table, food prices increased, during the quarter, in the six cities by amounts ranging from 2.4 per cent. in Warwick to 3.8 per cent. in Rockhampton. The increases were due mainly to rises in the prices of beef, pork, eggs, soap, and onions. Potato prices decreased in all cities.

The rent index increased in Toowoomba (0.2 per cent.) and Rockhampton (0.7 per cent.), but remained stationary in the other four cities.

Clothing, Footwear, and Miscellaneous Items.

Increases during the quarter in clothing and footwear prices, ranging from 1.0 per cent. in Warwick to 1.8 per cent. in Rockhampton, were the smallest since March quarter, 1949.

The miscellaneous items index decreased in Warwick by 0.1 per cent. but increased in the other five cities, the larger increases in Townsville and Bundaberg being due mainly to rises in the price of gas. The increase in Brisbane was caused chiefly by higher charges for electricity.

Comparison of Costs in Queensland Cities.

The following table shows the amounts, for the various Queensland cities, required in March quarter, 1950, to purchase the quantity of goods or housing which would have cost £1 in Brisbane.

Amounts Required in Various Cities to Purchase Equivalent of £1 in Brisbane.

City.	All Items.			Food and Groceries.			Rent (4 and 5 Rooms).			Clothing and Footwear.			Miscellaneous Items.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Brisbane ..	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Toowoomba ..	1	0	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	2 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	6 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	2	19	11 $\frac{3}{4}$	
Rockhampton ..	1	0	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	7 $\frac{1}{4}$	18	8 $\frac{1}{4}$		1	0	2 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	7 $\frac{1}{4}$
Townsville ..	1	0	9 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	1	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	19	10 $\frac{3}{4}$		1	0	2 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	1	4
Bundaberg ..		19	9 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	6 $\frac{1}{4}$	15	10 $\frac{1}{4}$		1	0	3 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	9 $\frac{1}{2}$
Warwick ..		19	10 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	3 $\frac{1}{2}$	17	5 $\frac{3}{4}$		19	11 $\frac{1}{4}$		1	0	11 $\frac{1}{2}$

During the quarter, the cost of all items together increased, in relation to Brisbane, in Rockhampton, Townsville, and Bundaberg, but decreased in Warwick. Prices were highest in Townsville, where goods costing £1 in Brisbane would have cost £1 0s. 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ d., and cheapest in Bundaberg, where the same quantity of goods could have been purchased for 19s. 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. Townsville's high level is chiefly due to dearer food, while Bundaberg's low position is due to low house rents.

Food and grocery prices in the five provincial cities remained dearer than in Brisbane. In Rockhampton the excess over Brisbane prices increased by 3d. in the £, and in Bundaberg by 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. Relative food and grocery prices in the other three cities remained much the same as in the previous quarter.

During the recent quarter, costs of clothing and footwear, in relation to Brisbane, were stationary in Toowoomba but increased further in Rockhampton, Townsville, and Bundaberg. In Warwick, where prices of these items during the previous quarter were at the same level as in Brisbane, there was a saving of $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in the £.

Prices of miscellaneous items showed practically no change in Toowoomba in the recent quarter. As a result Toowoomba became the only city where these items were cheaper than in Brisbane. In the other cities, additional amounts, ranging from 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. to 1s. 4d., were required to purchase miscellaneous items which would have cost £1 in Brisbane.

Basic Wage Rates in State Capital Cities.

The following table shows, for the March quarter of 1950, the retail price index number ("C" Series) for each of the six capital cities and the prevailing basic wage rates for males prescribed by Commonwealth and State industrial tribunals. The fourth column shows the amounts which would have been required in Brisbane to provide a standard of living equivalent to that provided by each State basic wage in its own capital city. The differences between these amounts and the State basic wage for Brisbane, which are given in the last column, show the margin of advantage in real purchasing power provided by the Queensland basic wage over each of the other State basic wages, according to price levels and wages prevailing at the middle of February, 1950.

Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates, March Quarter, 1950.

Capital City.	Retail Price Index ("C" Series) 1st Quarter, 1950.	Commonwealth Court Basic Wage for Males at 15. 2. 50.	State Court Basic Wage for Males at 15. 2. 50.	Equivalent at Brisbane Prices of Each State Basic Wage.	Margin of Purchasing Power in Favour of Brisbane State Basic Wage.
		£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	s. d.
Brisbane ..	1414	6 7 0	6 11 0	6 11 0	-
Sydney ..	1515	6 15 0	6 15 0	6 6 0	5 0
Melbourne ..	1501	6 14 0	6 14 0	6 6 3	4 9
Adelaide ..	1456	6 9 0	6 9 0	6 5 3	5 9
Perth ..	1479	6 11 0	6 18 1	6 12 0	-1 0
Hobart ..	1455	6 11 0	6 11 0	6 7 4	3 8

Following the publication of the index numbers shown in the above table, the basic wage of the Commonwealth Court was automatically adjusted from 1st May, 1950. The new rates and the amounts of adjustments are shown below, together with the latest basic wage rates for males and females declared by the various State industrial authorities and the dates from which they operated.

Basic Wage Rates, June Quarter, 1950.

Capital City.	Commonwealth Basic Wage.		State Basic Wage.		
	Males. ^a	Increase on Previous Quarter.	Males.	Females.	Date of Operation.
	£ s. d.	s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	
Brisbane ..	6 9 0	2 0	6 13 0	4 3 6	1. 5. 50
Sydney ..	6 18 0	3 0	6 18 0	3 14 6	1. 5. 50
Melbourne ..	6 17 0	3 0	(6 17 0)	a	(1. 5. 50) ^b
Adelaide ..	6 11 0	2 0	6 11 0	3 11 5	1. 5. 50
Perth ..	6 13 0	2 0	7 0 0	3 15 7	1. 5. 50
Hobart ..	6 11 0	-	(6 11 0)	a	(1. 2. 50) ^b

^a Female rates vary from 54 to 75 per cent. of the male rate.

^b No State wage declared, but rate shown is that of Commonwealth Court which is followed to a large extent.

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Table No. 1 - The "All Items" Retail Prices Index - "C" Series.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended March, 1950.	Quarter Ended -				
				March, 1949.	June, 1949.	Sept., 1949.	Decr., 1949.	March, 1950.
Brisbane ..	863	1079	1377	1295	1338	1364	1393	1414
Toowoomba ..	851	1092	1391	1304	1349	1377	1408	1429
Rockhampton ..	861	1084	1387	1307	1349	1373	1399	1428.8
Townsville ..	912	1119	1432	1356	1397	1418	1444	1469
Bundaberg ..	841	1059	1364	1287	1327	1352	1374	1401
Weighted Average								
Five Towns ..	864	1082	1382	1300	1343	1368	1397	1419
Warwick ..	822	1073	1377	1294	1339	1371	1390	1406

Table No. 2 - Food, Groceries, and Rent (4 and 5 Roomed Houses) Index - "B" Series.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended March, 1950.	Quarter Ended -				
				March, 1949.	June, 1949.	Sept., 1949.	Decr., 1949.	March, 1950.
Brisbane ..	852	927	1164	1130	1146	1147	1171	1193
Toowoomba ..	821	950	1185	1153	1169	1169	1188	1212
Rockhampton ..	837	915	1161	1129	1145	1143	1161	1196
Townsville ..	916	980	1225	1205	1213	1211	1228	1249
Bundaberg ..	799	888	1121	1098	1113	1110	1117	1144
Weighted Average								
Five Towns ..	851	930	1168	1136	1151	1151	1173	1197
Warwick ..	768	897	1139	1103	1124	1128	1141	1162

Table No. 3 - Average Retail Prices of Food and Groceries, Brisbane.

Commodity and Unit of Quantity.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Month of -		Commodity and Unit of Quantity.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Month of -	
		Dec., 1949.	March, 1950.			Dec., 1949.	March, 1950.
	d.	d.	d.		d.	d.	d.
Bread .. 2 lb.	5.33	8.00	8.00	Milk .. 1 qt.	6.00	10.10	10.10
Flour .. 2 lb.	3.73	5.36	5.36	Beef -			
Tea .. 1 lb.	26.99	31.41	31.41	Sirloin Roast 1 lb.	8.73	18.55	19.00
Sugar .. 1 lb.	3.98	4.91	4.95	Steak, Rump 1 lb.	11.34	23.55	24.55
Sago .. 1 lb.	3.00	8.75	8.85	Steak, Chuck 1 lb.	5.83	12.00	12.55
Jam, Plum 1 1/2 lb.	8.02	15.64	16.55	Rolled Brisket 1 lb.	5.48	12.00	12.55
Raisins .. 1 lb.	10.57	17.00	17.05	Mutton -			
Potatoes.. 7 lb.	14.88	23.05	21.41	Leg .. 1 lb.	7.75	12.15	12.15
Onions .. 1 lb.	2.93	3.41	4.56	Loin Chops.. 1 lb.	7.78	12.55	12.55
Soap .. 1 lb.	6.20	9.82	10.49	Perk -			
Butter .. 1 lb.	19.00	25.91	25.91	Leg .. 1 lb.	11.40	26.72	28.11
Cheese .. 1 lb.	13.28	17.41	17.55	Chops .. 1 lb.	11.48	27.06	28.61
Eggs .. 1 doz.	19.69	36.00	37.00				